[0109] In one aspect of the present invention, the inventor assigns his invention to the company, in exchange for the power, via the company's website and/or other services, to raise sufficient revenue to patent the invention, and in exchange for the contractual right to royalties from the invention. For example, assume that 10% of the royalty rights to the invention are retained by the company, 60% are retained by the inventor, and 30% were sold to investors to raise revenue to reach the third threshold (corresponding to the patent threshold). The invention is subsequently patented, and a manufacturer licenses the patent from the company, producing (according to the terms of the contract) a royalty stream of, say, $1 million in the first year. That royalty is then divided according to the respective shares owned: $600,000 to the inventor, $100,000 to the company, and $300,000 divided among the shareholders commensurate with their respective share ownership. For example, a shareholder who owns a 1% share would then receive $10,000, and a shareholder who owns a 1.5% share would receive $15,000, and so forth.

[0110] In one aspect, the company owns each invention and patent for the purpose of maintaining a controlling interest, with a contractual obligation to distribute profits or royalties according to share ownership. The inventor, upon listing the invention on the website, may be required to assign the invention to the company, but with rights of reversion if one or more of the thresholds are not reached. For example, if an invention reaches a search threshold, and is searched, but is incapable of reaching a nonprovisional patent threshold because, for example, the prior art discovered in the prior art search report is particularly good or close, then rights to the invention may then revert back to the inventor. Alternatively or in addition, investors who have already purchased shares in the invention to help it reach one of the thresholds may be allowed to retain that interest in the invention. However, there may not be any rights of reversion, except possibly if the invention has not reached any thresholds. For example, if an invention reaches the search threshold and a provisional patent application has already been filed, then the invention might be required to remain on the website for sale until the provisional application expires, in which case a patent is barred on the invention because it had already been published for over a year.

[0111] In one aspect most or all of the method may be performed automatically on a website. For example, soliciting of invention disclosures, publication of the invention disclosures, and selling shares of rights to the invention to raise revenue could all be performed on a website. Further, once a threshold has been established, the steps of determining if at least one of the revenue, number of shares sold, and total size of shares sold exceeds the first threshold, and causing a prior art search report or a patent application to be drafted on the invention, could be performed automatically by the website. For example, once the first threshold is reached (corresponding to a provisional application to be filed and the invention to be searched), the description of the invention could be automatically forwarded to a patent agent, patent attorney, and/or professional searcher, who then performs the necessary services. They may be automatically paid for their services, too, and the search report may be automatically published on the website. The same is true for the next threshold, whereby a nonprovisional patent application is drafted and submitted to the Patent Office. In other words, any or all of the steps described according to the present method may be performed automatically, such as by a website (i.e., via a computer running software).

[0112] One may cause a patent application or prior art search report to be drafted, for example, by sending the invention description (e.g., the one created by the inventor) to a patent agent/attorney or professional patent searcher and requesting that, respectively, a patent application or prior art search report be drafted. Alternatively or in addition, a user of the present method (such as a representative of the company) may cause these documents to be drafted by simply drafting them. These are merely examples and do not limit the ways in which one may cause a patent application or prior art search report to be drafted. One of ordinary skill in the art knows how to cause an event.

[0113] Profit may be collected on an invention by several means. First, profit may be collected even before a patent issues, such as by licensing a patent-pending invention and/or an invention whose patent application has been published. Profit after a patent issues may be obtained through many means, including licensing the invention to a user or seller, a court or mediation settlement in the case of infringement, or a court order or award or judgment in the case of infringement. The total profit simply includes the total paid by another for use or infringement of the patent, minus the costs necessary to obtain that money (e.g., litigation or attorney costs).

[0114] In one aspect, the patent application filed is published by the Patent Office at the normal, or preferably earliest, publication time. Because the invention and patent application may already be published on the website, and thus are exposed to the public early, the company, inventor, and investors should also benefit by "provisional" rights, which are royalty rights, available under certain conditions after a patent issues, that are retroactive to the time of publication by the Patent Office. The current fee for early publication (which usually takes place around three months after filing the early publication request) is $300.

[0115] The company may or may not perform additional services, such as litigation services. In one aspect, the company simply obtains and holds patents for inventors and investors, and waits for potential licensees to approach the company for licenses or for infringers to infringe the patents, in which case the company may then contract with other service providers (e.g., attorneys) to do the necessary work to extract royalties, damages, payments, etc. Alternatively or in addition, the company may have its own in-house legal team to perform some or all of these services. These services may be paid for by contingency fees (e.g., the attorney accepts the risk of performing the work for no cost up front, but charges a large fee, such as ⅓ of the settlement or court award if the suit is successful), the royalty or revenue stream from the patent at issue (or money raised in excess of the final threshold that has not been dispersed to the inventor or others), and/or a fund set aside by the company for such purposes, which may be paid into by any of the company's sources of money. Further, the company may guarantee responsibility only for legal or administrative expenses involved with prosecution of the patent application to patent, such as in appealing Patent Office decisions or in interference proceedings, but, once the patent is issued, may not guarantee any further action, or may depend only on outside counsel taking the case on a contingency basis, and so forth.

[0116] Preferably, the company is prepared to pay for legal actions in one or more cases, using a fund that has been paid into by at least one of the company's revenue sources, such as commissions. Often, a very valuable invention is finally